

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 153 475

FI 009 394

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TITLE Educational Media in the Foreign Language Classroom.
PUB DATE 78
NOTE 13p.; Paper presented at the Conference on New Methodologies in Modern Language Teaching (Cedar Falls, Iowa, Oct. 28-29, 1977)

EDRS PRICE MF-\$0.83 HC-\$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Audiovisual Aids; Bulletin Boards; Classroom Techniques; Educational Technology; Elementary Secondary Education; Foreign Language Films; Higher Education; *Instructional Media; *Language Instruction; Learning Processes; Media Selection; Multimedia Instruction; Multisensory Learning; *Second Language Learning; Slides; Tape Recordings; *Teaching Methods; Transparencies; Visual Aids; *Visual Learning; Visual Stimuli

ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to make a case for increased use of available technology, especially those aspects commonly designated as educational media, in the foreign language classroom. Several arguments are given to support this position. (1) Research has shown that sight is the dominant sense for most people; therefore, varied and integrated visual presentations would enhance retention. (2) Visual stimuli might obviate the oft-cited need to regress into the native language to insure comprehension. They would offer more possibility for establishing the full cultural/contextual meaning of foreign words without use of the native tongue. (3) In our media-saturated world, the teacher who ignores educational media may never get all students to "tune in." (4) Media can help to compensate for teacher language deficiencies, thereby improving the students' experience. Some available sources for suggestions on the use of media are mentioned. Several of the most appropriate media for foreign language teaching and concrete suggestions for their use are discussed, including duplicated materials, bulletin and hook and loop boards, transparencies, slides, flashcards, tapes, video tapes, and films. Whether the materials are simple or sophisticated, their effectiveness depends on the creativity of the teacher and the imagination which he/she uses in producing them and integrating them into the foreign language class. (Author/AMH)

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Educational Media in the Foreign Language Classroom

by
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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND
USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

The word medium may evoke any image from that of a spiritualist to the New York Times. All such images are correct, as media are properly defined as means of communication. Anything which communicates or fosters communication is a medium. In the foreign language classroom, we seek to help our students learn to communicate in a new way--in the target language. Presumably we language teachers have acquired adequate bilingual skills. The problem is how well we communicate these abilities to our students. I believe the evidence suggests we have done considerably less well than we surely desire. The decline in foreign language enrollments can, I feel, be at least partially explained by our failures to adequately communicate the desirability of foreign language learning, and equally important, its feasibility, without limiting either to only our very brightest students. As Allen and Valette have stated, "The key question is, Did the course succeed or fail with respect to the students enrolled in it? and not, Would the course have been more successful had more able students been enrolled?"¹ It is my contention that to increase desirability and feasibility, which implies greater student learning, foreign language teachers must make far greater use of available communications technology--a new language, if you will--especially those aspects commonly designated as educational media. There is currently a lack of understanding of the pedagogical rationale for using media, lack of knowledge of existing types of media, and a dearth of ideas for using them. My remarks are directed to these weaknesses in language methodology.

At this point it seems wise to differentiate educational media as I use the term from the perhaps more familiar but pedagogically outmoded "audio-visual aids." Technology's entry into education was unquestionably in the form of aids--strange and frightful machines which might occasionally be used in some

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purely tangential way by the rare teacher who had the nerve to attempt to thread a movie projector or use a wire recorder. As equipment became more common, often due to purchases made with federal monies, the strangeness disappeared for many teachers, but not the fear. Utilization increased, but still in a supplementary way, with little effort toward integrating the audio-visual materials into other class activities. Films, for instance, were an interlude, a change of pace, entertainment, not something from which to learn. Today we are still concerned with assorted machines and, more centrally, the materials called software which are used with them. Under the influence of research on learning and the application of systems analysis to education, the preferred term today must be educational media, not audio-visual aids, thereby recognizing the communications base and implying integration into the heart of instruction. Media must become the beginning point, not an afterthought, if their full potential is to be realized.

Are the media really so significant or is my claim simply another example of "educationese", that peculiar language spoken by persons who were presumably unable to succeed in the humanities and therefore escaped to colleges of education? The evidence of learning theory supports, I believe, the central place of media. Our goal in foreign language education is to facilitate the learning of a new form of communication. Communication occurs in many ways, as does learning. Learning obviously must occur through the senses. Smith has written, "One can only learn that which is transmitted to the mind via the senses. In the case of second-language learning, it is obvious that the senses receive stimuli, but that the mind does not necessarily perceive language."² How may learning be increased? Kinder cites the report of Coburn that people learn about 1% through taste, 1 1/2% through touch, 3 1/2% by smell, 11% by hearing, and an overwhelming 83% through visual experiences.³ This provides strong support for heavy emphasis on visual media in the classroom. Similarly, Mueller

speaks of the considerable variation in student auditory ability, an ability we have relied on heavily in language teaching. He notes that as auditory ability decreases, reliance on visual learning increases.⁴ Smith quotes John Carroll speaking out against " . . . the use of systems that employ mainly one sense modality, namely, hearing. . ."⁵ In addition to stressing the wrong sense, many of us have also been unaware of a related problem, verbal satiation. Chastain reports on research relevant to pattern practice and drills which found that " . . . constant repetition tends to weaken or actually cause a total lapse of memory of the repeated word. . ."⁶ Allen and Valette also emphasize the difference between "ear-minded" and "eye-minded" students.⁷ The importance of visual learning is further underscored by Hocking who believes that comprehension is achieved only when visual imagery is attained. He duly notes that even the blind say I see what you mean.⁸ Slowly, educators in all fields are beginning to recognize our improper reliance on a sense which is not dominant in most people. There can be little doubt about the value of visual stimulation in the learning process.

However, learning, as used above, is not necessarily synonymous with retention anymore than teaching is synonymous with student learning. We "teach" many things, but students do not necessarily "learn." Concerning retention, which is probably a better measure of learning, Kinder cites the work of Philips at the University of Texas, which showed that, on the average, we remember 10% of what we read, 20% of what we hear, 30% of what we see, 50% of what we hear and see, 70% of what we say, and 90% of what we say while doing something which reinforces what is said.⁹ This again establishes a strong base for visual instruction, but also supports the common expectation of student verbalization in the language classroom. Highest retention rates depend on a more active response than merely repeating something. Media can present material visually in the first place, but also offer students a ready means of actively doing something while speaking,

as will be illustrated concerning specific media.

The ramifications of our knowledge of human learning processes are more than adequate to justify greater use of media. However, there are other significant reasons. First, use of visual materials can help to avoid the intrusion of the native language into the classroom. Whatever our intent to use only the target language, in the interest of better comprehension we may tend to slip into English. In many cases visual media could ward off the regression by providing a direct link between mental image and the target language. Renard and Heinle, in describing the rationale for the audio-visual methodology used exclusively in Voix et Images de France, state, "The audio-visual method organizes instruction to minimize the negative effect of the native language (interference) and cultivates the development of a coordinate system . . . (in which the two languages function independently.)"¹⁰ In other words, visualization can facilitate thinking in the new tongue. In the teacher's manual for his series, Hermann Kessler writes, "Das Unterrichtswerk 'Deutsch fuer Auslaender' arbeitet nach einer einsprachigen, audio-visuellen Methode, die vom Hoeren ausgeht, das Verstehen garantiert, zum Sprechen anregt, das Lesen uebt und das Schreiben nicht vernachlaessigt. Diese moderne Unterrichtsart schaltet die Muttersprache des Schuelers soweit aus, dass der Lernende praktisch in der neuen Welt der fremden Laute lebt. . ."¹¹ Perhaps it is their greater experience over the years with foreign language instruction that has lead these Europeans to this understanding of methodology which we Americans have yet to fully achieve.

Secondly, but closely related, visual materials can increase the accuracy of comprehension, marking the difference between mere understanding of a word and understanding its full cultural/contextual meaning. Lottmann, speaking of films, claims that "hours of verbal exposition cannot assure the same accuracy of meaning as that conveyed by the visual image."¹² Hocking expressed concern that without proper visual materials, or English, a beginning German student

could well comprehend Fruehstueck as orange juice, toast, and Wheaties. He goes on, "The primary function of audio-visual learning is to by-pass the detour into English imagery by providing the authentic foreign references for simple details; more generally, it is to communicate the cultural climate and ethnic atmosphere without which the foreign language and people seem merely peculiar."¹³

Thirdly, we need to recognize the impact of our mediated world on our students. Scott laments that there is a major problem with language labs because "our tapes must successfully compete with interesting TV and radio fare in order to reach our already overstimulated students."¹⁴ Chastain notes that TV informs but also entertains, making it most challenging for a teacher to get and hold student attention.¹⁵ We have not typically competed too well, but multi-media teaching can help. It is pedagogically sound, but also reflects an attempt to move with the times, which Marshall McLuhan has termed the Electronic Age.

A final point both comforting and troubling is offered by Allen and Valette. Based on research published by the Center for Curriculum Development, which found no correlation between teacher language proficiency and student language achievement at the elementary levels, they suggest that a dynamic teacher of even low ability, who uses varied instructional techniques, i.e. media, may be even more successful than the very fluent teacher who is less concerned with student needs and learning styles.¹⁶ Kessler makes a similar claim for his series and materials by stating "Der hier beschriebene Weg . . . ermoglicht sogar dem Nichtlehrer einen erfolgreichen Unterricht."¹⁷ If instructional strategies employing media offer such hope for teachers with poor language skills, how much more do they promise in the hands of the fluent or nearly fluent teacher?

The errors of our ways were summarized by Dunn and Dunn as they sought to list common occurrences in schools which may actually prevent, not enhance student learning. Among other points, they note the following: using teaching

methods which involve only one perceptual strength; using a textbook (reading) approach; using only one method or approach to teach a concept; requiring students to learn essentially from only the teacher or text; and basing instructional strategies on teaching style rather than learning style.¹⁸ It is time that we accept what is known about learning and cognitive styles and move to create a learner-centered, media-rich foreign language classroom.

Major emphasis has been placed on showing the necessity of using media in the classroom because teaching with media is not easy and preparation time can run high. Teachers are unlikely to adopt these new methods unless they are firmly convinced of their value. It should not be forgotten that language teachers have probably made as good use historically of some media as any other group. Realia, foreign records and magazines, films borrowed from consulates, and audio tapes, especially in language labs, have long been standard tools of good language teachers. What is lacking seems to be a basic understanding of the types of media now available and their potential to fit the instructional needs identified through systems analysis. Scott has described language labs as being "in the throes of protracted adolescence." He went on, "For the moment our technological know-how has outdistanced our ability to devise imaginative applications to teaching problems."¹⁹ Unfortunately, the lab seems to have contracted terminal illness in adolescence. The media of which I speak were not created solely or even primarily for foreign language teaching and will not suffer a similar fate if we fail to adopt them. It is our profession and students who will suffer.

If we are to make this leap into the present, teachers will require guidance, which appears to be in short supply. Language texts based on media are scarce. Most texts make little reference to media at all, and certainly not as central to instruction. Allen and Valette seem to offer the best general information about media in language teaching in their book Modern Language Classroom

Techniques.²⁰ Their suggestions for ways to teach the various skills using media are quite good. They properly stress that teachers will need to make most of their own materials, but they emphasize that success with visuals is not dependent upon artistic skill, a comforting point. However, their section dealing with production of various materials is too sketchy for the person with no other knowledge of media production and makes several points which are inaccurate or misleading at best. Eberhard Reichmann's massive anthology The Teaching of German. Problems and Methods.²¹ devotes a chapter with eight articles to "audio-visual aids and technical media," but neither the scope, imaginativeness, nor accuracy of the articles is impressive. The German teacher will find some help in the AATG's Unterrichtspraxis and does have access to ready-made materials through the AATG/NCSA Service Center. Other languages may have similar resources. If not, journals such as Audio-Visual Instruction can help.

Time precludes discussion of specific production procedures. Rather, let me briefly suggest a few ideas for using some media which may prompt teachers to make contact with their school, Area Education Agency, or other accessible media center for further help. Reference may also be made to media production books, such as Kemp's Planning and Producing Audio-Visual Materials.²²

Surely all teachers use a Ditto machine to make handouts. Most do not know that spirit masters come in colors other than purple. Teachers can very effectively call attention to critical parts of a handout, such as verb, noun or adjective inflections, by using two or more colors to prepare the master. Visual graphics to aid retention may be easily incorporated into handouts by using a thermal spirit master, also unknown to many teachers.

Bulletin boards become a real learning device, not just a room decoration, when a cassette tape is added to create a talking bulletin board. For example, the idea might be a tour of Paris based on a city map and some postcards. The

teacher or advanced students can prepare a tape in the foreign language, which guides student examination of the materials. Students can listen to the tape individually during study time, while completing a worksheet designed to elicit active responses.

Hook and loop boards are a little-known application of Velcro, the materials used to make the arm wraps of blood pressure measuring devices fit any arm. Standard bulletin boards are covered with special loop fabric. Materials made of poster board are easily secured to the board via hook tape and can be moved about much like on a flannel board with no fear of items falling off. In fact, heavy three-dimensional objects can also be used. Applications are unlimited. One specific idea is to put individual words on pieces of poster board and use them on the hook and loop board to demonstrate word order transformations. Students can then practice using the materials, doing while saying.

Overhead transparencies can virtually replace the blackboard for any teacher. Time is saved by preparing transparencies in advance rather than writing on the blackboard. Specific ideas include putting words on small pieces of plastic as another way of treating work order. Using the overlay technique, one can begin with a basic diagram of a table, then step by step add in tableware, glasses, etc., to set the table, all the while practicing vocabulary and stimulating student speaking. In the same way a house may be furnished room by room, a person may be clothed, and so on. Overlays are also effective for interlinear transcriptions in linguistics. Finally, transparencies of scenes, possibly done as color lifts from magazine pictures, can be excellent conversation stimulators. Simple illustrations such as are found in Bonnell and Sedwick's Conversation in German: Points of Departure²³ can be made into transparencies to get students away from vocabulary lists printed in the book beneath the pictures.

Slides can add a major element of realism to presentations on culture. Individually, they, too, can serve as excellent conversation starters or even

the stimulus for compositions. Students may be challenged to write a sound track to accompany a given set of slides, which they then record in the foreign language with appropriate background music. Since most students have access to at least Instamatic cameras, they might be asked to photograph some aspect of their home life, favorite activities, etc. and then show their slides to the class while narrating them in the foreign language, much as they might in an exchange student position. Properly executed, slides can be one of the most powerful tools for the classroom. Although originally applied to the filmstrips made to accompany Voix et Images de France, the comments of Renard and Heinle fit slides as well. "The picture does not 'create' meaning . . . in any direct or simplistic way; it creates the optimum conditions for comprehension."²⁴

Simple flashcards using coloring-book type drawings or dry mounted magazine pictures are effective for group vocabulary work and sentence practice. Color coding can cue gender recognition and/or plural formation.

Audio tapes, in addition to their common language lab and ethnic music applications, have many possible uses. The AATG/NCSA may be able to provide taped speeches, radio plays, etc. from Germany. Sound tracks from foreign films can be recorded onto cassettes for in-depth study, with or without editing. Short-wave broadcasts may be recorded off-the-air for study. Local native informants might agree to interviews which could be taped for later use in class.

The Language Master, a specialized form of tape recorder, can be valuable for individual work on pronunciation problems or vocabulary building. Some versions can provide for language lab type sentence drill.

Videotapes can be made in class of student activities, like practicing dialogues, attempting conversation, giving mini-dramatic productions, or devising commercials, newscasts, etc. Most students will enjoy seeing themselves on television. They can also learn aspects of using foreign body language through

this medium. Even more ambitious would be the off-air recording of a TV program or commercial, to which a foreign sound track would be added. This is technically easy with newer videocassette recorders which have two separate sound tracks available. Pre-recorded tapes are also becoming available from abroad.

Motion pictures are within the production capacity of teachers and students. Home movies might be made for which a taped sound track would be prepared or a live narration given. After viewing a foreign film, students might be required to write a synopsis, discussion or evaluation of it. Some teachers have shown short films several times with sound, then asked students to narrate a silent showing. Commercial sound 8mm films can have foreign sound tracks added and silent films can be narrated.

These ideas really serve only to scratch the surface of a neglected methodology. The only limit is the imagination of the teacher. Media are important, even vital to maximum effectiveness in teaching, but it is largely up to the individual to make the applications. Most commercially available materials do not fit the needs peculiar to each class, and as enrollments have declined, producers have had less reason to bring out new materials. We cannot sit back and wait. As Allen and Valette point out, "Effective teaching does not mean waiting for ideal materials to be made available. It means investigating materials presently available and using them to their fullest extent."²⁵ To this I would add, effective teaching will mean producing many media items yourself, with the aid of your media center. Hocking summarized the case well. " . . . (The) timeless goals of the humanities must adapt to the changing conditions of the times. . . (With today's students) . . . we must 'speak their language' or they will not bother to learn ours."²⁶ I submit that their language is media.

NOTES

1. Edward David Allen and Rebecca M. Valette, Modern Language Classroom Techniques (New York, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc. 1972) p. 3.
2. Phillip D. Smith, Jr., Toward a Practical Theory of Second Language Instruction (Philadelphia, the Center for Curriculum Development, Inc. 1971) p. 28.
3. James S. Kinder, Using Instructional Media (New York, D. Van Nostrand Company, 1973) p. 39.
4. Theodore H. Mueller, "The Development of Curriculum Materials for Individual Foreign Language Instruction," in Howard B. Altman and Robert L. Politzer, Individualizing Foreign Language Instruction. Proceedings of the Stanford Conference. (Rowley, Mass., Newbury House Publishers, 1971) p. 150.
5. Smith, op. cit., p. 38.
6. Kenneth Chastain, Developing Second-Language Skills: Theory to Practice, 2nd ed. (Chicago, Rand McNally College Publishing Company, 1976) p. 80.
7. Allen and Valette, op. cit., p. 5.
8. Elton Hocking, "Audio-Visual Aids and Technical Media," The Teaching of German. Problems and Methods. Eberhard Reichmann, ed. (Philadelphia, National Carl Schurz Association, 1970) p. 293.
9. Kinder, op. cit., p. 39.
10. Colette Renard and Charles Henry Heinle, Implementing Voix et Images de France Part I in American Schools and Colleges (Philadelphia, Chilton Books, 1969) p. 12.
11. Hermann Kessler, Deutsch fuer Auslaender. Lehrerheft (Koenigswinter, Verlag fuer Sprachmethodik, 1962) p. 2.
12. Anna Marie Lottman, "Films in the Modern Language Class," in The Teaching of German. Problems and Methods. Eberhard Reichmann, ed. (Philadelphia, National Carl Schurz Association, 1970) p. 301.
13. Hocking, op. cit., p. 293.
14. Joseph L. Scott, "The Language Laboratory," in The Teaching of German. Problems and Methods. Eberhard Reichmann, ed. (Philadelphia, NCSA, 1970) p. 308.
15. Chastain, op. cit., pp. 168-169.
16. Allen and Valette, op. cit., p. 4.
17. Kessler, op. cit., p. 3.
18. Rita Dunn and Kenneth Dunn, Educator's Self-Teaching Guide to Individualizing Instructional Programs (West Nyack, New York, Parker Publishing Company, 1975) pp. 47-48.

19. Scott, op. cit., p. 307.
20. Allen and Valette, op. cit.
21. Eberhard Reichmann, ed., The Teaching of German. Problems and Methods. (Philadelphia, NCSA, 1970).
22. Jerrold E. Kemp, Planning and Producing Audio-Visual Materials, 3rd. ed. (New York, Thomas Y. Crowell, 1975).
23. Peter Bonnell and Frank Sedwick, Conversation in German: Points of Departure (New York: American Book Company, 1969).
24. Renard and Heinle, op. cit., p. 29.
25. Allen and Valette, op. cit., p. 11.
26. Hocking, op. cit., p. 295.